

What is Liberty.

BY J. W. BEER.

The above question was presented to my mind very forcibly by the first editorial in No. 2. I have been waiting for some one with more fire than I have, to say something about said editorial; but so far no one has said yea or nay, and I now feel to give it a passing notice. If this article should partake of the nature of controversy, my only apology is, when there are two sides to a question, if one side is admitted into the columns of the EVANGELIST, so should the other be. We do not want our paper to become a partisan sheet, and whenever it does we (or, at least, I) shall have no farther use for it. What I have to say, I shall say in kindness, but also with all firmness.

The heading is, "Religious Ordinances a Bar to Liberty." The editor says, "This title does not properly forecast the nature of what follows." Perhaps it does not; but a careful reading "of what follows," reveals that he advocates the view that "religious ordinances" are "a bar to liberty," if they are strenuously adhered to or observed. If this is not his view, I shall be glad to be corrected; but if this is what he advocates, I want to assist in correcting him.

But how does he arrive at this conclusion? He says he does it by Mr. Henry's rule of judging of the future by the past. This is a good rule; but I am not ready to admit either his postulates, argument, or conclusion.

First he assumes that "the tendency has always been toward more severity in the attitude toward the ordinances of the church." By "ordinance of the church," we are to understand baptism, foot-washing, the Lord's Supper, &c. If it meant what the church ordains, it might hold good; but referring to these sacred and holy gospel ordinances it is not a fact. It is not true that the Catholic church, the Greek church, or any of the dissenting churches of long standing, constantly became more severe or rigid in their adherence to the observance of these gospel ordinances with which they began. The whole history of these bodies shows a tendency to depart from a faithful observance of the ordinances; so much, that with some of them there is scarcely a trace of the original observance left. A moment's reflection is enough to satisfy any one of the correctness of my position. You need not read over long pages of history to determine this matter, but just compare the present with their beginning. Their own opinions, their own traditions and usages, their own ordinances were exalted and rigorously enforced; but looseness and deviation has always been the tendency with reference to these sacred ordinances; and as surely as the past is indicative of the future, we are exposed to the same danger. The tendency is from liberality to latitudinarianism and disloyalty, from faithfulness to indifference and disobedience, from orthodoxy to toleration and heresy.

But what if heresy should be the result? The editor says, "It is inconsistent to issue decrees of expulsion where there is no charge except heresy." Inconsistent with what? Inconsistent with his opinion; inconsistent with wild, unrestrained latitudinarianism; inconsistent, perhaps, with the views of Archdeacon Farrar; but certainly it is not inconsistent with the teachings of the great apostle to the Gentiles, who said, "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." Tit. 3: 10. If it had been said it is unnecessary, instead of "it is inconsistent," I could have said amen; because we do not need "to issue decrees." If we enforce the decrees that are given us by divine authority, we shall do well. If Bro. A. begins to preach and practice single immersion instead of the ordinance of the gospel, all we have to do is to admonish him, and if necessary a second time and then, if he still adheres to his heresy, the decree is "Reject" him. The admonition is to reject the man, not merely the heresy while we continue to hold the man as a brother.

Now, if you say I am narrow, exclusive, selfish, illiberal, I must ask, What is Liberty? Yes, what is liberty? Liberty is consistent with economy, frugality, honesty and faithfulness. A liberality that would require us to be lax in duty is prodigality. That is just what the Pharisees

had. They were rigid in traditions, but slack in the law; they made the law of God void by their traditions; and the Savior spake to them the parables of the unjust steward and the prodigal son. Such liberality is not only prodigality, but it is heresy, and the Lord says, "Thou mayest no longer be steward."

In conclusion, if "religious ordinances" are "a bar to liberty," then liberality must be wrong, or Christ is a foe to rights; for he sanctioned, observed, and ordained religious ordinances. No, no, my brother. Turn the thing right around, and you will have it straight: extreme liberality is a bar to religious ordinances; i. e., to their faithful observance.

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Premeditated Deception.

This may seem strange to some, and they may wonder, as to the truth of Premeditated Deception; yes I believe there is, and that even among ministers of the Gospel who, against their better judgment, will write out some serious article, full of deception, to mislead the minds of their people, and blind their eyes, and feed them on husks, and they relish their fill seemingly on nothing but the dry husk or tradition of man. How sweet the pure kernel would be to such, if they would but go to the plain word of God, and submit to his command, and example. I have before me a Treatise on Baptism, by Rev. J. J. Leberman. This work comes under the heading of this article, by careful investigation and reasonable conclusion.

It starts with a twist into the Bible, and by following the twist, it would take you out again. Reasoning from cause to effect, I believe that many are twisted into the Bible, and twisted out again by sophistry.

Now I will not give the readers of the EVANGELIST his exegesis of the scriptures on the mode of baptism for it would be too lengthy. But I will show you how he has tried to blind the minds of his readers by his craftiness in trying to prove sprinkling for baptism.

Now this is what he says: "Lately there has been found a document of great value to the church, bearing testimony to the great truths of Christianity, and also giving much light on the early practices of the church. The document is called, 'The teachings of the Twelve Apostles.'"

The authenticity of the document has been established by eminent scholars of the age. It was written about 100 A. D., about the time of the death of John the Evangelist, and undoubtedly gives what was taught and practiced during that early period of the church's history. This document speaks as to the manner in which water was applied in baptism, and it establishes what we have already stated, that church history bears incontrovertible evidence in favor of pouring or sprinkling.

Here is what the document says: (chapter 7) 'Now, concerning baptism, baptize thus: Having taught all these things, baptize ye into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in living water. And if thou hast not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold then in warm. But if thou hast neither, pour thrice upon the head in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.' Then he says: "Those who hold to immersion being the only mode of baptism, can find no comfort in this last found record—possibly the oldest of post apostolic writings." This is the only history quoted in his work. And now I wonder in the name of all that is honest, how such learned men, can read over such plain tangible testimony as the given history. And still cling to sprinkling for baptism, which is so unfounded, unwarranted by the scripture, and church history.

Now let us examine the document, and see if it is incontrovertible and so conclusive, in teaching or even favoring sprinkling for baptism. It teaches; "baptize thus:" this teaches the prescribed way, the only way given "Having taught all these things," such things as faith and repentance and the necessity of baptism, "baptize ye into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," according to the formula given by Matt. 28: 19, "in living water. This means a flowing

or running stream, like unto the Jordan no doubt, notice in the water, not out of it or close by. "And if thou hast not living water, baptize into other water:" now if you have no running stream that you could have access to, the natural conclusion would be, that permission is given to baptize into still or standing water, no doubt the writer meant a pool or baptismal font, but it is still "into the water" like Philip and the Eunuch, "and if thou canst not in cold then in warm." By this we understand that if our physical debility would not allow us to go into cold water for we are to use these bodies, as not abusing them, we may make it warm, which can be very easily done in a font. The writer of this article had a sister immersed thrice in a large vessel, in warm water, she was an invalid but it was down "into the water." "But if thou hast neither pour thrice upon the head in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Now it is very conclusive and incontrovertible, that sprinkling, and single immersion is even not limited at, in this post-apostolic document, now pouring is only admitted in case, that it is impossible to attain to sufficient water. But such circumstances are very scarce indeed. The Rev's church edifice only stands about 100 rods from a beautiful flowing stream, and he has no excuse, for not going to the living water, with every penitent and believing child and baptize them into the living water to be "buried with Christ in baptism and rise to walk in newness of life." The Rev. tried to establish sprinkling by claiming that a baptismal font that was found, was entirely too small to baptize otherwise than by sprinkling. It is not conclusive nor reasonable to suppose that a font was required for sprinkling. From the fact that the modern day sprinklers do not have any use for a font. They can with one pint of water sprinkle a thousand, but cannot baptize them. If sprinkling would be baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost was in like manner, so sparingly sprinkled upon those who profess to follow Christ, why I am not astonished at the much thread-bare religion, so much of our heart would be untouched by the sprinkling of the Holy Ghost. That evil spot would exist in our hearts in abundance.

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Keep the machinery out of sight. Nature always does so. There are some churches that are admirably equipped and well officered, yet they impress one of a manufactory rather than a home. We see so many church piston-rods and cylinders and fly-wheels and lathes and hammers that we can hardly see anything else. We may turn and beat iron into shape by means of these; but we cannot make growing plants in that way. The machinery of the church should be like the bones in the human body, visible only in beauty and efficiency. The machinery of the church should not be like the noisy force pump; but rather as the invisible agencies through which the sun lifts up the waters to scatter them in fruitful showers upon the earth. Making a display of the machinery is not the best recommendation for the church. better let the work recommend the machinery, and keep the machinery out of sight.

What the impression of the yielding wax is to the image on the seal, the life of a faithful believer is to the precepts of the Lord Jesus. What is written in them is visible in his tempers and actions. Hence he may so yield himself to the pressure of that divine seal as to be transformed by it into such spiritual beauty that as it was with Stephen, the proto-martyr,—

"Men will behold his angel face
All radiant with celestial grace."

This radiance is often visible on the faces of dying saints. Why is it not seen more frequently than it is on the features of living, active men?—*Zion's Herald*.

Every relation which we occupy hath its duties; every hour with which our lives are lengthened out hath its divine purpose. These relations were not ordained by God only to please us, and ought not to be indulged in with that idea. Chiefly they are means for our growth in grace.—*Mountford*.